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ABSTRACT

Even though their diversity makes comparison with public schools difficult, American private schools should voluntarily provide data about their students, teachers, and their students' academic abilities to the government's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). NCES' private school data will increase the schools' visibility and help inform government policy makers who propose laws and regulations that ultimately affect private schools. Results of a 1976 to 1979 mail survey of private schools, sponsored by NCES, the Council for American Private Education, and the National Catholic Education Association indicated that in 1979, a total of 19,663 private schools existed in the United States, serving 5,084,297 students with 272,664 teachers. An average of 259 students attended each school, 80% of which were parochial schools and 50% of which were Catholic schools. Two-thirds of all private school students attended Catholic schools. Private schools comprised 18.4% of all schools and served 10.7% of all students with 11.9% of all teachers. Enrollments in boarding schools declined but enrollments in schools serving one sex increased. National longitudinal studies of high school seniors in 1972 and 1980 indicated that 1980 seniors were more interested in money and academics and less interested in correcting socioeconomic inequalities than 1972 seniors. (SB)

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Private School Data: Issues of Policy and Procedure
The Federal Perspective

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I want to thank Arthur Powell for organizing this session. Not only do I welcome the opportunity to share with you my thoughts on the Federal role, and responsibility, in the collection of data on private schools, but I hope that the symposium format will stimulate debate which will broaden our individual perspectives and thus constructively bring us closer together, (if, in fact the research perspective is so very different from the Federal perspective as I describe it).

At the same time, I have a responsibility under Public Law 93-380, "The Education Amendments of 1974," to collect, collate and report full and complete statistics on the condition of education in the United States and also to conduct and publish specialized analyses on the meaning and significance of these statistics. We cannot limit our report to public elementary and secondary schools. Private school children constitute close to 11 percent of the total elementary and secondary school enrollments and they must be recognized. I will address both the policy and procedural aspects of the Federal government's role in private education data collection, analysis, and reporting.

As Administrator of the National Center for Education Statistics, I am well aware of Public Law 96-511, "The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980," which the Congress passed last December in an effort to get some control on what is

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perceived as an unbridled burden on the public for more and more information. Clearly, the intent of the law is to eliminate unnecessary requests and, while there is considerable interest in developing data on private schools, there is clearly something short of a concensus on the subject.

The data we provide to researchers, government and school officials, to parents, and the public at large, should elucidate national issues. Public education is a national issue. Private education is a national issue. State governments are being successfully challenged in the courts for some of their regulations of church-related schools. The Internal Revenue Service evoked a nation-wide debate when it called for substantial regulatory changes affecting the tax-exempt status of private schools. National opinion polls continue to reveal parental anxieties about the public schools. Public education leaders call for basic school finance reform and changes in the tax structure for their schools. Vouchers and tuition tax credits have elicited a growing national interest in recent years. The proponents of such government aid plans cite the need to exercise parental choice in schooling and the need to have competition and pluralism in education provided by the private schools. Those who oppose such aid packages are critical of the admissions selectivity practiced by private schools which they refer to as "creaming." Some aid opponents predict the demise of public education by any diversion of public funds from public to private education.

The U.S. Supreme Court has made landmark rulings which recognize the responsibility of the state to provide public schools, and at the same time, the right of parents to choose the schooling they want for their children. I want to cite just a few statements from the the majority opinion in the 1972 Wisconsin Amish case:

> "There is no doubt as to the power of a State, having a high responsibility for education of its citizens, to impose reasonable regulations for the control of and duration of basic education. Providing public schools ranks at the very apex of the function of a State. Yet, even this paramount responsibility, in Pierce, was made to yield to the right of parents to provide an equivalent education in a privately operated system."[1/]

Although the litany of issues could be continued, I believe these references make it clear that all branches of the Federal government, and indeed the state governments, are involved in one way or another with both public and private education. Therefore, I believe it is an acceptable public policy for the National Center for Education Statistics, a Federal government agency, to survey private schools along with its survey of public schools. Although I would hope that private schools would be encouraged to participate in these surveys, I would be the first to say that such participation must be strictly voluntary.

I do not perceive our surveying of private schools as a mindless response to the legislative mandate to report on the condition of education. The more I work in government the more I am convinced that there needs to be a body of knowledge based upon cold, hard, accurate, useful and timely data about all of our schools. I take pride also in saying that our Center is apolitical, and our energies have been so directed in my tenure as Administrator. You, who are at this symposium, who have a special interest in private education must

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1/ Wisconsin v. Yoder 406 US 213 (1972)

remember that government is making decisions that affect your schools. Why not provide the facts that will give needed direction to any proposed governmental action which ultimately will affect your schools. Now I am not saying that you should provide everything some bureaucrat may think he has to have. But there are the basic facts about the numbers of students, schools, teachers, educational programs that would help parents in their decision making, help researchers in their efforts to sort out the issues affecting public and private education, and perhaps even assist associations which represent your schools.

Let me mention one other area that should be of immense interest to those persons primarily interested in private education. This has to do with various State testing programs whether achievement or competency testing. In some cases, I hear that only the public school testing results are released. The Heritage Foundation recommends that we publish the SAT scores by school, both public and private. It seems to me there are many essential facts which will benefit even the private schools if such facts are known. You should not be asked to supply finance data, unless you would not object to reporting tuition charges.

Where does one find such facts? It is not easy. I realize that some private school associations are collecting data about their schools which are useful for their particular membership. But I suggest that the public has the right to expect that the Federal government should be able to provide basic data on our private schools to make comparisons with public schools. As I have said, the Congesss clearly intended that this be the case when they established the National Center for Education Statistics in 1974. Indeed, it was just one hundred years ago that the first U.S. Commissioner of Education told why the

government sought to know about the condition of education. Said Henry Barnard, "We take an account of education that we may know whether it is sufficient in amount and quality."

Now I want to focus upon our survey of private schools for the three school years, 1976-77, 1977-78, and 1978-79. This survey series was jointly planned by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the Council for American Private Education (CAPE), and the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA). A mail questionnaire was used in each of the three years. Data for Catholic schools were obtained by the NCEA and data for the remaining schools were obtained by CAPE. All nonrespondent follow-up was conducted by these two organizations, including a final telephone contact to schools which failed or refused to return completed survey forms. Respondents were asked to classify their schools by type (elementary, middle, etc.), type of facility (day, boarding, etc.), sex of student served, and church affiliation, if any. They were asked to report the October enrollment and the full-time equivalent number of teachers employed. An item indicating which, if any, of selected Federal assistance programs the school participated in was also included.

Type of School: Schools were classified into four categories according to level of instruction or type of program provided.

a. Elementary and Middle: Schools which serve pupils in any combination of grades below grade 9, provided that there is at least one grade below grade 7, and one grade above grade 1.

b. Secondary: Schools which serve pupils in any combination of grades above grade 6, but not above grade 12.

c. Combined Elementary and Secondary: Schools which serve pupils in any combination of grades, provided there is at least one grade below grade 7, and one grade above grade 8.

d. Special, Vocational, and Alternative: Schools which serve handicapped pupils or vocational pupils exclusively or provide programs as alternatives to the "regular" programs.

Type of Facility: Schools were also classified according to whether they served day students only, boarding students only, or both day and boarding students. A count of boarding students was not obtained in the surveys.

Church Affiliation: Schools were classified with respect to church affiliation or no affiliation. Catholic schools include those affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church, including the "private" Catholic schools operated by religious orders. Other affiliation includes schools associated with other religious denominations. In most cases the parent church group exercises some control over or provides some form of subsidy to the schools. The nonaffiliated schools are usually privately operated or under control of a board of trustees of directors.

Enrollment: Enrollment is expressed as the number of pupils in membership, i.e., the number of pupils on the school roll, on or about October 1 of the school year.

Teachers: Numbers of teachers are expressed in full-time equivalents, i.e., the sum of the number of full-time teachers and the full-time equivalence of part-time teachers. It does not, therefore, represent the number of persons employed full- and part-time by the schools as teachers.

Pupil/Teacher Ratio: This ratio is obtained by dividing the number of pupils in membership by the full-time equivalent number of teachers. It does not reflect the number of pupils a given teacher might face in a given class within a school. The ratios contained in the report were obtained by dividing the total number of pupils in a class of schools by the total FTE of teachers in that class of schools.

Many fundamentalist Christian schools for which national association membership lists could not be obtained were not included in these surveys.

A potentially serious data limitation resulted from the fact that about 10 percent of the schools which were canvassed either failed or refused to respond to the surveys. An effort was made to contact nonrespondents by telephone and partial data were received from most.

To compensate for the voids resulting from the lack of complete response, the Center engaged the services of the Statistical Analysis Group in Education (SAGE) of the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to design an imputation model and assign missing values for nonrespondents. Since many of the values had to be imputed, all of the totals included in the report of our survey are estimates, and are subject to certain biases that may have been introduced by the imputation process used.

Here are some facts from our survey of private schools. For 1978-79, there were 19,663 private schools, with 5,084,297 students, and 272,664 teachers. The average number of pupils per school was 259. Just about 80 percent of the private schools reported church affiliation. Although total school enrollment decreased by 3.6 percent between 1967 and 1978, pupils attending private schools decreased at a slower rate, 1.6 percent.

Briefly comparing public and private education as percents of totals:

	Public	Private
Schools	81.6%	18.4%
Pupils	89.3%	10.7%
Teachers	89 %	11.9%
High School Graduates	90.5%	9.5%
Pupil/teacher ratio	19.4	18.6

There are considerable variations in the data reported by the several denominations. For example, the pupil/teacher ratios varied markedly. The smallest pupil/teacher ratio was found in the Friends' schools with 10.6, and the highest in Catholic schools, with a 22.8 pupil/teacher ratio. Pupil enrollment in the three years showed increases in all denominations except Catholic and Methodist, which had decreases of about 4.5% each. The non-affiliated schools also reported a decrease in enrollment of about 1.5 percent.

Catholic schools enroll more than 3,300,000 students, Lutherans more than 217,000, Baptists over 204,000 and Seventh Day Adventists about 148,006. Baptist schools report the largest number of teachers and high school graduates among the non-Catholic affiliated schools.

Although there were decreases in the number of boarding schools and boarding school pupils, there were increases in the numbers of schools, pupils, teachers, and high school graduates in schools which served both day and boarding school students.

Another interesting finding is the increases in the schools, pupils, teachers and high school graduates in the schools that serve a single sex.

The larger increases were observed in boys schools, a 37 percent increase in the number of elementary and middle schools, with a 70 percent increase in the number of students.

About four-fifths of the private schools have a church affiliation; about 50 percent being Catholic and 30 percent affiliated with other denominations.

Almost two-thirds of all private school children attend Catholic schools with less than 15 percent attending non-affiliated schools. About 10 percent of the pupils attended schools serving pupils of a single sex, while less than five percent attended schools serving boarding students.

Although we do other surveys involving private schools, such as the teacher supply and demand, and the school offerings and enrollments, I want to tell you about the national longitudinal studies which are creating much national interest because the findings bear directly on current issues in education.

Our first study dealt with the High School Class of 1972 and the current one was initiated last year with a representative sample of high school sophomores and seniors in Class of 1980. This study is generally referred to as High School and Beyond (HS&B), in case you haven't already heard of it. I'm sure that most of you attended Jim Coleman's invited address "Public and Private Schools" last night.

The 1972 study and follow-ups included a sample size of 22,000 seniors, while the 1980 study has more than 58,000 students participating. Eighty-six private schools participated in the '72 study and 119 private schools are participating in the current study. Here are just a few findings which show comparisons between the 1972 and 1980 seniors:

- o A greater percentage of the '80 seniors than the '72 class agreed that schools should have placed more emphasis on academic subjects (76% to 50%).
- o Working to correct social and economic inequalities was viewed less important by the '80 class; in fact, less than half as many seniors in 1980 thought it important (13% to 27%).
- o Having "lots of money" was viewed more important by the '80 class (31% to 19%) and living closer to parents and relatives was also conceived more important (14% to 8%).
- o More of the '80 seniors expected to be working full time right after high school than did the '72 seniors (30% to 26%).

The HS&B study was oversampled for private secondary schools with large black and Hispanic enrollments. The National Opinion Research Center is the contractor. Here are a few of Coleman's findings about secondary schools:

- o Private education is strongest in Connecticut where it enrolls nearly 17 percent of all high school students; at the other extreme, Wyoming has only 1.5%.
- o Most Catholics are enrolled in public schools, indeed, they constitute the largest segment of the public school population by religious affiliation 30.7%.
- o The relative percent of Baptists and Lutherans are smaller in non-Catholic high schools than they are in public schools. Baptists share the second highest percent religious group enrolled in public schools 22.5%. Interestingly, Baptists are also the largest non-Catholic membership attending Catholic high schools.

Another paper of considerable interest to private schools is the one by Father Andrew M. Greeley called, "Minority Students in Catholic Secondary Schools." Father Greeley used the High School and Beyond data from the Coleman study for his paper.

Just four years ago, I spoke on Education Data Collection at AERA and made this statement, "We have a common interest in knowing and in communicating our knowledge about education: how it works, who it serves, how well it serves, and what types of resources it requires." It seems to me that thought is appropriate now as we are considering NCES' surveying of private education. In the the past there was little effort to include private school data with our elementary and secondary education surveys. However, by working diligently with national groups, such as the Council for American Private Education and the National Catholic Education Association, we did achieve the three-year study which I have reported on today.

Now I want to draw your attention to some of the problems in attempting to make data comparisons between public and private schools. The very characteristics of diversity which makes private education so important in a pluralistic society, makes difficult the data comparisons even among private schools. There is a desirable level of consistency of terms, definitions, and quantities. As a matter of fact, we need agreement among the state education agencies on the definition of a school. For our survey, we counted as "elementary-level" only those schools which had a grade above grade one. Perhaps we missed a number of new private schools which were starting with kindergartens and first grades only. On the other hand, we wanted to avoid including nurseries or day-care centers as being elementary schools.

I am pleased that Dr. Paul Kienel is here because we need dialog with the Christian school leaders. Just recently I read that his Association of Christian Schools International has 1,482 schools enrolling 289,000 students. We would hope that these and other Christian schools would participate in our private school surveys. I have met with Mr. Robert Baldwin, Executive Director, Citizens for Educational Freedom, on how we may at least communicate more effectively with the Christian schools. Our survey instruments need to be carefully explained to all participants so they know that their participation is strictly voluntary. There should be agreement and understanding that the Federal government cannot regulate either public or private schools. What we must convey is that the statistician's role is to supply accurate and timely data to both government and public use. At the same time, keeping at a minimum the data burden government imposes upon the public and private schools. We know it is difficult to dispel feelings of mistrust in government especially if there is either no communication or poor communication between the affected parties.

But there is one parallel which I want to particularly address to private education and that has to do with the civil rights movements of more than two decades ago. You may recall that some minorities sincerely believed that government reports should not show the race of the persons in educational programs or in various occupations. It became apparent however, that there was little to communicate about minority achievements unless the government included race in its reports and on its various applications. I say the parallel is there for private education. You are a diverse group of educators; and as much as that diversity is needed, your visibility is not what it should be for the public in general, as well as for government. I hope

you see much advantage in "letting your light shine" in more than isolated news articles. We look to you to counsel with us on how best to gather, analyze, and report on all of private education, and, at the same time, show all the individual elements which make up private education. It is my belief that the better informed government policy makers are about private education, the less likely will there be laws or regulations which you would consider harmful.

There are problems in both the policy and procedural aspects of private school surveying, but I believe they are soluble. We may not agree on who or what or when, but at least we can follow some wise counsel passed to mankind a long time ago, "come now and let us reason together." If we have reason in our discourse, perhaps we can ameliorate some of your resistance and some of our mistakes. I trust that this symposium will provide such a forum for reasoning together.

Thank you